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Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development Program (AGRED)



Quarterly Report

July – September, 2012

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Afghan Agricultural Research & Extension Program (AGRED)

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Contracting Officer's Representative	Mark Kelly
Contracting Officer's Representative	Mohammed Junaid
Contracting Officer	Paul Martin
Chief of Party	Kingsley Bash, PhD,
ROP CEO	Heidi Kuhn, heidi@rootsofpeace.org
ROP Executive Director	Gary Kuhn, gary@rootsofpeace.org



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Executive Summary

The activities conducted during the July-September 2012 quarter were largely concerned with program start-up. AGRED Chief of Party Kingsley Bash arrived in Afghanistan in August. AGRED's Director of Women Farmers Program Hasina Rasuli arrived in September. AGRED staff recruitment continued throughout the first quarter and will continue next quarter, focusing particularly on hiring Research and Extension Coordinators, including Coordinators for the Women Farmers Program.

During July-September, AGRED submitted to USAID plans for Mobilization, Branding and Marking and a baseline survey. It is drafting a Work Plan for submission to USAID in the first quarter of FY 2013.



Dr. S. Ken Yamashita, USAID Mission Director and H.E. M. Asif Rahimi MAIL Minister inaugurate the AGRED Lunch Ceremony

The AGRED team is emphasizing coordination with USAID/Kabul and USG implementing partners to ensure that a clear and consistent understanding of the AGRED program is shared among participants, and especially with MAIL. Initial meetings with USAID focused on anticipated challenges, including: the MOU between MAIL and ROP; future agreements between USAID and MAIL for on-budget funding, and coordination with other USAID programs in Afghanistan. For example, USAID plans to use AGRED's PMP as an example for future "on-budget" M&E programs.

The AGRED team met with USAID and USDA in Kabul and Herat to discuss start-up activities and coordinate strategies. Several meetings were held at the US Embassy in Kabul to introduce the ROP AGRED team to its USAID counterparts.

Prior to meeting with MAIL, AGRED held coordination meetings with USAID to insure that MAIL gets consistent information on the general approach of the AGRED program, the MOU between USAID and MAIL that will guide AGRED's coordination

with MAIL, the mechanism for on-budget funding, and cooperation among the three USG programs – Capacity Building and Change Management (CBCMP), Afghanistan Agriculture Extension Program (AAEP) and AGRED – that are collaborating to raise the capacity of MAIL to respond to Afghan farmers’ needs. AGRED will adopt some of the extension approaches developed and tested by AAEP, e.g. Work Groups of Extension Officers having expertise and in crop categories like cereals, horticulture and livestock.

A Technical Working Group (TWG), comprised of eight MAIL research and extension managers, as well as representatives of CBCMP and AGRED was created to identify and prioritize research and extension needs of farmers and agribusinesses. The research and extension activities identified in these workshops will provide the basis for MAIL proposals to USAID for funding under Implementation Letters. The Technical Working Group held three meetings during this quarter.

MAIL requested AGRED to extend its training program to other MAIL departments and directorates including Home Economics, forestry, natural resource management and livestock.

AGRED program offices have been renovated and are now equipped and occupied. The start-up phase and activities will be completed early in the first quarter of FY 2013.

I. Program Objectives

The Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development Program (AGRED), funded by USAID in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), is a five-year program designed to increase agricultural productivity and incomes in Afghanistan through the application of science and technology.

AGRED programs will include farmers in prioritizing research and extension activities, and facilitate farmers’ access to research and extension services. They will strengthen the technical skills of research and extension professionals through formal and on-the-job trainings, and assist them in identifying, assessing and deploying improved technologies and farming practices. The four components of AGRED are:

1. **Research and Extension** - Applied research and provision of extension and advisory services.
2. **Training** - Training and capacity building of research and extension staff to deliver services to Afghan communities.
3. **Communication** - More effective communication with and increased access to improved technologies, knowledge and education with emphasis on agriculture best practices by Afghan farmers.

4. **Infrastructure** - Improved applied research and extension infrastructure in 7 target sub-national Research Centers and fifty target districts.

Specific AGRED program activities will be implemented using the following methods and mechanisms:

- Technical training for researchers and Extension Officers
- Management training for research and extension managers
- Refurbishing infrastructure on selected research centers
- Bundling extension information and improved technologies in “Tech-Packs”
- Competitive research funding
- USAID Implementation Letters

1.1 Research and Extension

The research and extension component of AGRED’s program has two major objectives: 1) accessing on-budget funding provided by USAID to MAIL under Implementation Letters; and 2) building the capacity of MAIL and DAIL research and extension managers to use the on-budget funding effectively.

Progress during July-September

The first meetings with the MAIL Technical Working Group (TWG) were held in August to introduce AGRED goals, strategy and objectives. The 2013 work plan for research and extension activities was discussed with specific attention paid to on-budget funding. In September, AGRED conducted two meetings with the TWG to define the process, activities and schedule of deliverables required to apply for on-budget funding provided under Implementation Letters (ILs) to be issued by USAID.

The TWG meetings resulted in an agreement to conduct stakeholder workshops designed to identify the priority research and extension needs that can be addressed using funding from ILs in 2013. AGRED briefed the MAIL TWG on the participatory process required to access on-budget funding for research and extension activities. This process will begin with seven stakeholder workshops in November.

The AGRED ROP team met with USDA’s CBCMP and AAEP programs to define the relationships and refine the plans for coordinating their programs. Effective working relationships were established between the three programs.

During July-September, the ROP AGRED team met with USAID and USDA in Kabul to ensure a shared understanding of their programs’ strategies and to coordinate activities. Several meetings were conducted at the US Embassy in Kabul to introduce the ROP AGRED team to their USAID and Civil Affairs Team counterparts. These meetings were held prior to AGRED’s meetings with MAIL to insure that MAIL and DAILs received consistent information on: 1) the strategy and general approach of the AGRED program 2) collaboration of three USG programs - Capacity Building and Change Management (CBCMP), Afghanistan Agriculture Extension Program (AAEP)

and AGRED – to build MAIL’s capacity to respond to the needs of Afghan farmers, 3) the MOU between USAID and MAIL defining AGRED’s roles and responsibilities, and 4) future agreements between USAID and MAIL for on-budget funding.

AGRED met with USAID M&E Manager Alexandria Huerta, who asked AGRED to revise its draft PMP submitted in mid-September, arguing that it should reflect AGRED’s dependence on MAIL getting “on-budget” funding through USAID’s Implementation Letters (ILs). While AGRED is responsible for assisting the MAIL in applying to USAID for ILs and for monitoring the use of on-budget funds from USAID, AGRED cannot control the actions of MAIL in applying for or using funds.

AGRED’s responsibilities to monitor its own performance and the MAIL’s performance will require a new approach to M&E and performance monitoring that should be reflected in AGRED’s PMP. USAID/Kabul wants to use AGRED’s PMP as an example for future “on-budget” M&E programs. It proposed to develop a team of USAID and AGRED M&E professionals to evaluate alternative approaches to M&E for programs involving on-budget funding. USAID assured AGRED that revising the PMP will not affect the work plan or slow implementation activities.

Challenges

AGRED programs require close coordination with MAIL. They include complex sets of activities required to develop some of the MAIL’s major directorates. Many AGRED activities will require agreements and active coordination between AGRED’s MAIL counterparts. This degree of collaboration and partnership arrangements is unusual for USAID programs. The AGRED team will not directly implement program activities like other USAID projects. Instead, AGRED will work through the MAIL.

Highlights

USAID/Kabul wants to use AGRED’s PMP as an example for future “on-budget” M&E programs.

Women Farmers’ Program

There are common misconceptions that women are not farmers and that extension services provided to male family members will reach women indirectly. AGRED will increase public awareness of the critical roles women play in producing crops and livestock, generating income, ensuring food security and contributing to the national economy. It will provide technical support to extension services that reach women directly. The AGRED Women Farmers Program is designed to:

- Identify women role models in villages.
- Provide leadership training.
- Form and provide technical assistance to women’s groups.
- Increase educational opportunities for women to study agriculture.

- Increase women's direct involvement in research and extension
- Improve collaboration between the field staffs of the MAIL Home Economics Directorate and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.



DAIL female staff receives training to identify the research and extension projects in the regions

Progress Made during Quarter

- AGRED's Director of Women's Program Dr. Hasina Rasuli joined the program on September 25.
- Rasuli and AGRED COP Kingsley Bash met with MAIL Extension Director Mr. Habibi to discuss how MAIL programs for women farmers will be upgraded and expanded, suggesting an important opportunity for coordination between AGRED, the Extension Directorate, and MAIL's Home Economics Department.

Rasuli traveled to target provinces to recruit Regional Women Farmer Program Coordinators. She met with AGRED COR Mark Kelly and the USAID Gender Unit to seek guidance in coordinating with other gender programs.

Challenges

- There are relatively few women working in the research and extension programs of MAIL's Home Economics and Extension Departments. AGRED will provide trainings and workshops to build their capacity, and will offer to assist MAIL in recruiting more women for field positions.

Highlights

- The MAIL is planning to expand the number of women in the Extension Directorate.

1.2 Training

ROP and a consortium of three U.S. universities led by Washington State University will provide technical training for researchers and Extension Officers. They will also provide management training for research and extension managers. The objectives of these training programs are to identify, assess and deploy the information and technologies needed by Afghan farmers. The trainings will develop the capacity of MAIL and DAILs to conduct their own trainings in the future. Training topics and materials will be developed based on assessments conducted by AGRED, the university consortium, other USG funded programs, and the preferences of MAIL and DAILs.

Progress Made During Quarter

AGRED drafted a subcontract with the consortium led by Washington State University. The contract will be finalized in the first quarter of FY 2013. Trainings conducted by the consortium members are scheduled to begin early in the second quarter of FY 2013.

During July-September, AGRED held its first meetings with MAIL Extension Director Mr. Hukum Khan Habibi, who suggested that AGRED training should be extended to other MAIL departments and directorates of Home Economics, forestry, natural resource management and livestock. AGRED agreed that these technical areas are within its mandate, and that it will discuss Mr. Habibi's suggestion when it meets with university consortium representatives in early December to review the training plan, budget and contract.

In September, AGRED conducted meetings in Herat to establish relationships with local USAID, CBCMP and AAEP officers in Herat, the Perennial Horticulture Development Program (PHDP), and Herat University. AGRED research and extension activities will rely on the revised MAIL and DAIL administrative procedures implemented by CBCMP. It will adopt some of the extension approaches developed and tested by AAEP, e.g. Work Groups of Extension Officers with expertise and responsibilities in crop categories like cereals, horticulture etc.

Like several of the universities in AGRED's target provinces, Herat University has stronger research capabilities than their local DAIL Research Centers. Herat University and the Herat DAIL have already drafted an MOU to share research

expertise and resources. AAEP is promoting a similar relationship between Balkh University and the DAIL Research Center in Balkh. These institutional linkages may provide models that can accelerate agricultural research and technology transfer.

Challenges

AGRED and AAEP activities are complementary, but not identical. To avoid confusing stakeholders, AGRED and AAEP will exploit opportunities to coordinate their activities. At other times they will need to clearly distinguish the differences between their programs. Unlike AGRED, for example, AAEP funds extension activities from its own budget, and it does not deal with agricultural research.

Other sources of stakeholders' confusion concerns: 1) the use of on-budget funding provided under Implementation Letters; and 2) USAID's schedule for issuing ILs. AGRED encourages USAID to define the types of activities that can be funded under ILs and discuss these funding parameters with senior MAIL officials. AGRED can help USAID communicate these parameters to mid-level MAIL managers.

Highlights

The institutional linkages between DAIL Research Centers and local universities can provide mechanisms for accelerating agricultural research and technology transfer.

Good Practices

- Early involvement with other USAID-funded program to identify potentially complementary strategies and activities, and to develop consensus and common messages for client organizations.
- Early coordination with MAIL to build professional rapport, relationships and understanding of program strategy and limitations.

Next Quarter (October- December 2012)

1.3 Communications

Reporting on this component will also begin in the second quarter of FY 2013. AGRED's long-term communications work plan will be developed in coordination with MAIL. Also in the second quarter of FY 2013, AGRED will develop printed and electronic information about AGRED to disseminate to various stakeholders.

1.4 Infrastructure

Reporting on this component will begin in the second quarter of FY 2013.

1.5 Monitoring & Evaluation

Reporting on M&E depends on USAID's approval of AGRED's PMP. AGRED expects to begin in the second quarter of FY 2013 to report on progress toward indicator targets.

PMP

In concurrence with USAID, AGRED has extended the time frame for developing the PMP in order to devote adequate resources to design a PMP that will provide guidelines for future projects involving on-budget funding to ministries responsible for agriculture and other sectors. It is anticipated that a final draft of the PMP will be submitted on the second half of September.

The AGRED results framework and activity schedule have been drafted and submitted to USAID for approval in the first quarter of FY 2013.

1.6 USAID-Approved Success Stories

Start-up activities during July-September did not generate Success Stories that would be relevant to USAID's primary target audiences for Success Stories.

List of Acronyms

AGRED/USAID	Afghan Agriculture Research and Extension Development Program
AAEP/USDA	USDA Afghan Agriculture Extension Program
CBCMP/USDA	Capacity Building and Change Management Program
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CHAMP/USAID	Commercial Horticulture & Agricultural Marketing Program
DAIL	Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IL	Implementation Letter
HR	Human Resources
IR	Intermediate Result
LOP	Life of Program
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NCU	National Coordination Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
R&E	Research and Extension
EC	Extension Coordinators
RC	Research Coordinators
RFP	Request for Proposal
ROP	Roots of Peace
SO	Strategic Objective
U.S.	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government